



United State
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

March 2021

NDOT Gazex Avalanche Control Structure Replacement

Scoping Document

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Carson Ranger District

Washoe County, Nevada

Comments Welcome

The Carson Ranger District of the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is initiating scoping and welcomes comments on the proposed replacement of the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) avalanche control system and building near the Mt. Rose Ski area. The proposal would upgrade the existing avalanche control facility to reduce the hazard to travelers along this segment of the Nevada State Route 431, Mt. Rose Hwy. Project information is also available on the project website at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/htnf/landmanagement/projects>.

The Forest Service has tentatively determined that this proposed activity may be categorically excluded from further analysis and documentation in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) [36 CFR 220]. A proposed action may be categorically excluded only if there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action and the proposed action is within a category listed in section 32.1 or 32.2 of FSH 1909.15. This proposed action falls within section 32.2(20).

Your comments, ideas, and concerns regarding this proposed action are important to the design and analysis of this project. I request your input as it relates to the proposed action and identification of any issues (point of discussion, debate, or dispute) about the anticipated effects from the proposed activities. Specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action and include supporting reasons for me to consider. Feel free to share your comments through email as described at the end of this document.

Background

The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) operates a Gazex avalanche control structure on National Forest lands off the Mount Rose Highway (NV SR 431) in Washoe County. The facility is used to release built-up snow along a section of the highway near the Mt. Rose summit to reduce the hazard to travelers. This highway provides an important connection between the Reno area and Lake Tahoe and is

heavily used in the winter by commuters and recreationists using Tahoe Meadows and the Mt. Rose Ski Area.

The current shelter does not meet building code requirements and NDOT submitted an application to construct a new shelter that meets code. In addition, the Gazex equipment used at the site has exceeded its typical life expectancy of 20 years.

Proposed Action

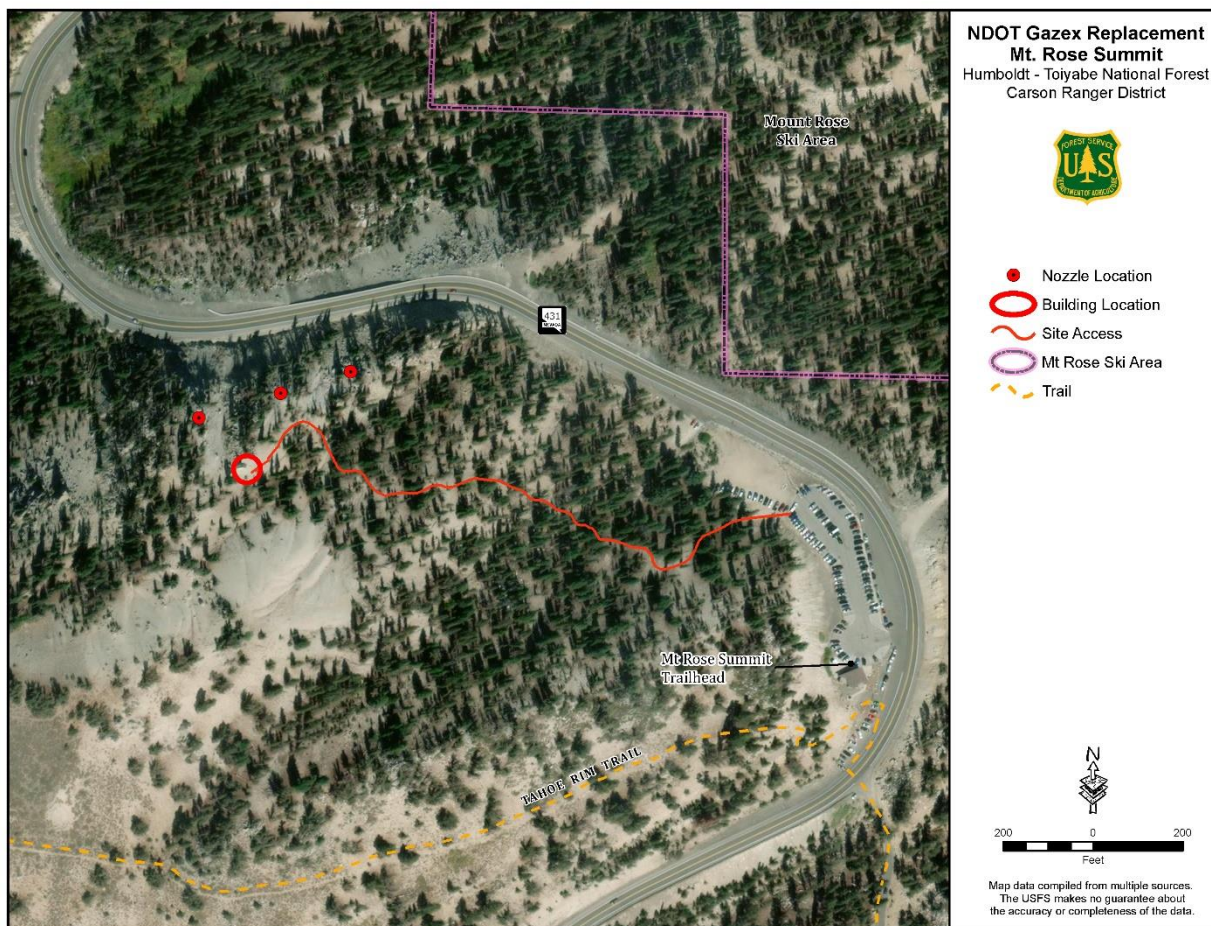
The Forest Service proposes to approve the replacement of the existing building and the installation, operation, and maintenance of new Gazex equipment. The project is located off SR 431 near the Mt. Rose trailhead parking lot. A map of the project area is shown in the attached map.

The proposed building would be two-stories and approximately 10 feet by 10 feet. The color would be similar to the color of the existing structure and blend with the natural surroundings. Vegetation does not need to be removed for the new building since it was sited in area without trees or Tahoe draba, a Forest Service sensitive plant. The existing exploder cannons would also be replaced along with the conduits from the shelter to the cannons. The existing cannon foundations may also need to be replaced; the new foundations would be in approximately the same location as the existing foundations. The conduits would be buried approximately one-foot in depth; trenching would be done by hand to avoid disturbance of any Tahoe draba plants in the vicinity.

After completion of the new facility the existing building and Gazex system would be removed. The disturbed area would be re-contoured by hand to match the surroundings. The special use permit will be amended to include the new building.

Access: There is an existing native surface route, approximately 8-10 feet wide, from the north end of the Mt. Rose trailhead parking lot to the building. The building and most of the access route are within the Mt. Rose-Galena Inventoried Roadless Area. This route would be used to bring in some small equipment and materials to the site. No expansion or improvements to this path would be implemented. Larger equipment and materials would be brought in by helicopter using the Mt. Rose Ski Area parking lot as the base of operations. The equipment is operated during winter months by NDOT personnel and maintenance occurs during the summer months to replace materials and service the exploders. A gate or natural barriers would be placed at the start of the route to restrict unauthorized vehicle access.

Construction Schedule: Construction is proposed to occur during the summer and fall of 2021 with the new Gazex system operational for the winter of 2021/2022. The old building and Gazex equipment would be removed in summer and fall of 2022.



How to Comment

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted. Comments must be submitted to: District Ranger, Carson Ranger District, 1536 South Carson St. Carson City, Nevada 89701. The office business hours for those submitting comments in person are: 8am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), and Word (.doc) to sally.champion@usda.gov. Please ensure comments have an identifiable name attached.

Comments received in response to this proposed action, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection and will be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

Comments should be received by the Forest Service no later than March 31, 2021. For further information contact Sally Champion, project manager, at sally.champion@usda.gov or (775) 884-8116.

eUSDA NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.